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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 005941

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL/WBG: EU OFFICIAL OUTLINES EXPANDED POLICE PROGRAM AND POSSIBLE ROLE IN RAFAH

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (B) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: During a meeting with the Ambassador on September 30, EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process Marc Otte outlined EU plans to expand its police program in the West Bank and Gaza and EU preparations for a possible third-party role at the Rafah crossing. Otte also described GOI-EU discussions about preventing participation by Hamas in the PLC elections or suspending EU assistance if Hamas wins. Otte was cautiously optimistic on the peace process and suggested a number of steps the Israelis, Palestinians, and international community could take to move forward. End summary.

Expanding the EU Police Program

2. (C) Otte said the purpose of his current trip to the region is to assist an EU team in studying ways to increase aid for the Palestinian police. In coordination with USSC General Ward, the EU hopes to expand the scope of its security assistance by:

- adding rule of law programs;
- tripling the number of EU police officials in country -- Otte noted that seven EU police officials are currently in the region, including an officer co-located in the MOI in Ramallah and two officers assigned to Gaza;
- deploying one or two EU officials in each police district; and
- focusing the mission more on mentoring than monitoring.

3. (C) Otte said that the EU should have a written "concept of operations" completed in the first week in October, which would allow recruitment of police officers through mid-November and deployment shortly thereafter. He added that Dov Weissglas, senior advisor to PM Sharon, had been "very positive" when presented with the plan. PA President Mahmud Abbas and the Egyptians are also on board, although Otte admitted that he is having difficulty finding working-level interlocutors on the Palestinian side. When asked by the Ambassador about the security of EU personnel, Otte replied that EU officials on the ground have "no sense of being threatened." The EU's head of security affairs is currently in Gaza reviewing the situation. Recalling the 2003 attack which took the lives of three U.S. security contractors, the Ambassador cautioned Otte that a higher profile EU role in support of the PA might well increase the threat of terrorist violence against EU personnel.

Rafah: EU Preparing for Possible Third-Party Role

4. (C) The Ambassador outlined steps the USG has taken to restart the Rafah talks. Otte said he is examining scenarios for a possible third-party role monitoring goods -- for customs and/or security purposes -- and/or people transiting through the Rafah crossing. He claimed that Weissglas had told him on September 29 that "maybe there is no other way." Otte added that Vice Premier Shimon Peres had said that the EU should expect a request to help in Rafah "soon." Otte said he told the GOI that the EU is not eager to send its people to Rafah, but would do so if asked. He noted that the EU would have to look closely at costs and security, including the question of deploying EU police or military personnel to protect the personnel in Rafah.

Hamas and the PLC Elections

5. (C) Otte noted that during a meeting in New York, Sharon had told PM Blair and HighRep Solana that Israel will try to prevent Hamas's participation in the PLC elections, and that on September 29 Peres had urged the EU to suspend assistance to the PA if Hamas wins. Referring to statements by the Quartet and the Secretary, the Ambassador stressed that our goal must be to prevent any victory by extremists. In Otte's view, the Palestinians need to have a serious internal debate on Hamas and mobilize their own people against extremists. He claimed that Gazans are "fed up with the cycle of retaliation" and that Palestinians in the West Bank routinely urge EU officials not to speak with Hamas.

Cautiously Optimistic on the Peace Process

16. (C) On the peace process, Otte said he was cautiously optimistic and:

- the international community will "need to push the agendas of both parties beyond what they are prepared to do;"
- the GOI should limit its unilateral moves on the security barrier and settlements (the situation in East Jerusalem is "becoming very problematic");
- the Wolfensohn team should concentrate on making progress on the freedom of movement for Palestinians;
- the international community should help the PA build governmental structures capable of absorbing assistance and showing voters that the PA can ensure security; and
- the international community needs to manage expectations on both sides ("this is not Oslo; not Camp David").

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JONES